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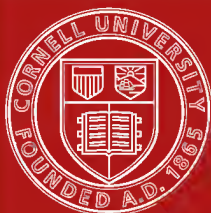
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New Facts

relating to

The Chatterton Family.

NEW FACTS RELATING TO
The Chatterton Family

GATHERED FROM MANUSCRIPT ENTRIES IN A
"HISTORY OF THE BIBLE"

WHICH ONCE BELONGED TO
THE PARENTS OF
Thomas Chatterton the Poet

AND FROM

Parish Registers.

(Edited and Indexed by Wm. George.)

BRISTOL:
W. GEORGE & SON, 26, PARK STREET,
1883

THE interesting manuscript records in the Chatterton family History of the Bible were discovered by Mr. John Taylor, Librarian of the Bristol Museum and Library, and communicated by him to the "Athenæum," in which journal they appeared December 10th, 1881. The following pages contain a re-print of Mr. Taylor's communication, and a selection from the controversial letters it evoked, to which are added a few notes and an index.—W. G.



The Master's House, Pile-street Free School.
(From "Bristol: Past and Present.")

THE CHATTERTON FAMILY.

I.

(From the *Athenæum*, December 10th, 1881.

Museum and Library, Bristol.

A BRISTOL dealer in curiosities has now on sale an imperfect quarto history of the Bible, printed in the last century, but undated, containing the original family entries of the birth and baptism of Chatterton, and the like of his brother and sister. The book has escaped the collectors, and was lately bought by its present owner from a poor person in Bristol. The title-page of the Old Testament portion is missing, and the work, which is much thumbed, partly no doubt by the young poet himself, begins with "Book II." The New Testament history retains the title, which is as follows:—"A Compleat History of the Holy Gospel: containing the Incarnation, Birth, Doctrine, Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ. Illustrated with Notes, explaining several difficult Passages and reconciling many Texts that are seemingly Contradictory." The inscriptions, which are unquestionably genuine and contain particulars not to be found in the biographies, are on the back of this title, except one at the end of the book, which is crossed through. The firm, round, schoolmaster's style of penmanship shows the hand of the poet's father, who conducted the Pile-street School. It may be inferred that he was a believer in astrology, for he has given the ages of the moon for casting the horoscopes of his children's births. It is curious that the name first appears as "Chadderdon":—

Mary, the Daughter of Thomas and Sarah Chadderdon, was born in Pile-street, Teusday Morning about 8 a Clock, the 14th day of February, Anno Domini 1748-9, and Baptized the 13th March following by the Reverend Wm. Williams in St. Mary Redcliff Church.

George Pew of Temple parish	} Godfathers.
John Pipping of Maryport	
Jane Moses	} Godmothers.
Jane Arden	

Moon first Quarter 13 day 1 morning.

Giles Malpas, the Son of Thomas Chatterton by Sarah his Wife, was born at the Charity School in Pile Street, on a Wednesday Morning between 4 & 5 a clock, 12th Dece. 1750, and was Baptized in St. Mary Redcliff Church the first day of January following by the Reverd. Mr. Wm. Williams.

Andrea fuhrer	} Godfathers.
J. Fredrick Moser	
Betty at ye Deans	} Godmothers.
Ann Andrews	

Moon last Quarter 9 Decem. 3 in ye Afternoon. and died April the 16
Aged 4 months and 4 days.

Thomas, the son of Thomas and Sarah Chatterton, was Born November the 20 in 1752, on a Monday Night between 6 and 7 o Clock, and was baptized in St. Mary Redcliff Church the 1 (?) Day of January following by the Rev. Mr. Giles.

Full Moon the 22 at 3 and 4 Evening.

The inscription at the end of the volume was probably cancelled as being wrongly placed, and may have been rewritten on the earlier and missing title. It is the record of the marriage of the poet's father and mother. Though crossed through it is quite legible and is as follows :—"Thomas Chatterton and Sarah Young were married at Sodbury Church in Gloucestershire by Mr. Jno. Coats on Monday the 25 day of April in the year 1748."

JOHN TAYLOR.

II.

(From the *Athenæum*, December 17th, 1881.)

It is singular that one so surrounded by Chatterton references as is Mr. John Taylor should have been so easily imposed upon by the palpable fabrication communicated by him to your last number. The imposture is too gross to rank with the Chatterton inquest story, the spuriousness of which was thoroughly proved by Mr. Moy Thomas in the "*Athenæum*" (December 5th, 1857). Thomas Chatterton, the schoolmaster, whose hand Mr. Taylor deems shown by "the firm, round, schoolmaster's style of penmanship" in which the "unquestionably genuine" inscriptions are made, died August 7th, 1752, and his son Thomas, a posthumous child, was not born until November 20th of the same year; therefore the father could not have been the author of that record. Nor could he, nor any of the family, have made the minute inscription of Mary's birth, as it antedates that event by two years. Nor could the forgery have been perpetrated by any one very conversant with the time and place to which it refers, as no such clergyman as the Rev. Wm. Williams or the Rev. Mr. Giles held benefices in Bristol during the last century. The Rev. Thomas Broughton was Vicar of St. Mary Redcliff from 1744 to 1772.

The "particulars not to be found in the biographies," which Mr. Taylor contends are afforded by the inscriptions in this family Bible, may, therefore, be reduced to two, viz., that the maiden name of the poet's mother was "Young," information certainly not in "the biographies," and that the poet had a brother, and that brother was christened by the suggestive names of "Giles Malpas," a circumstance certainly over-looked by all investigators. Before either of these data can be embodied in future biographies, however, some more satisfactory evidence of their authenticity must be produced. This hitherto unknown boy, it should be noticed, was born in the same year as Mary Chatterton's birth really took place.

These inscriptions bear a suspicious resemblance to a memorandum extracted by Catcott, "the Rowley midwife," "from a manuscript of Chatterton's father's writing in a blank leaf of a family Bible," i. e., the one hoax evidently suggested the other. As regards the name of "Chadderdon," it may be pointed out that "the biographies" do furnish that as the ancient form of spelling, and the poet himself was presented to Colston's Hospital as "Tho. Chadderton," so unsettled was the orthography even then. Perhaps it is scarcely

worth while to ask the courteous librarian of the Bristol Museum to obtain further particulars of this book from the "dealer in curiosities" in whose possession it now is; no sooner is its true character displayed than the quarto will doubtless disappear. Poor Chatterton, whose character and life I have endeavoured to portray truly in a forthcoming article in "Harper's Monthly Magazine," was forced into palming off his best work as the production of others, and in return, ever since his death, he has been made the victim of unscrupulous fabricators. I could point to a large *quantum* of rubbish foisted on the public as by "the marvellous boy" that is not his work at all. Even so careful an editor as Prof. Skeat has been betrayed into including in his useful two-volume edition of the works of Chatterton material the unfortunate lad had nothing whatever to do with. "Thus the whirligig of time brings in his revenges."

JOHN H. INGRAM.

III.

(From the *Athenæum*, December 31st, 1881.)

Museum and Library, Bristol.

It may surprise Mr. John H. Ingram to learn that I have not been so inattentive to my advantages of being "so surrounded by Chatterton references" as to be imposed upon by a "palpable fabrication." I may inform him that I have verified the inscriptions in the family 'History of the Bible,' which he condemns, so far as the baptisms are concerned, by the original entries in the register of St. Mary Redcliff. Had Mr. Ingram, instead of copying from the printed authorities, which have perpetuated one another's omissions and errors, ascertained from documentary evidence the real facts of the case in dispute, as I have myself done, he would not have accused me of carelessness and credulity, nor should I have to tax him with ignorance on points of a subject of which he professes to know so much. As he seems unacquainted with some of the rudiments of his theme, I will afford him a few details for use in his projected paper on the poet Chatterton.

In the first place he states the indisputable fact that Thomas Chatterton the father could not have made the entry in the quarto of his gifted son's birth, the latter being "a posthumous child." It happens, however, that the handwriting referring to this, the youngest child, though still in a firm round hand, is distinctly different from that of the other records, which circumstance is something towards establishing the authenticity of the inscriptions in general. In opposition to his next objection, that neither "he [the father] nor any of the family [could] have made the minute inscription of Mary's birth, as it antedates that event by two years," I may,

"On such a point where Garter's self might err,
Quote—fearless quote—the Parish Register,"

wherein, under the head "Baptizeings," and the year 1748, March 13th, I find "Mary, daughter of Thomas Chatterton." This shows that there is not an antedating of the event in question, but that the date exactly coincides with the inscription in the Bible history. With respect to the information "that the poet had a brother, and that brother was christened by the suggestive names of 'Giles Malpas,'" Mr. Ingram confesses it to be so original that strong confirmation is required to prove the fact. I will undertake to convince even him. Under the proper date, then, 1750, January 1st, I find in the same baptismal register, "Giles Malpas, son of Thomas Chatterton." "This hitherto unknown boy," adds Mr. Ingram, derisively, "it should be noticed, was born in the same year as Mary Chatterton's birth really took place." Who asserts this unlikely fact? Not I, nor the register, but Mr. Ingram! A tablet inserted in the front wall of the master's house in connexion with the Pile Street School gives the reason why this odd name was adopted by the poet's father:—"This house was erected by Giles Malpas, of St. Thomas Parish, Gent., for the use of the Master of this School, A.D. 1749." This was one year before Giles Malpas Chatterton was born, and it tends to show that in naming his eldest son after his patron the much decried schoolmaster was not altogether destitute of the feeling of gratitude.

The third entry in the register, though the most interesting, Mr. Ingram does not object to, but I may as well quote it: "1753, Jan. 1. Thomas, son of Thomas and Sarah Chatterton." As to the objection contained in the assertion that "no such clergyman as the Rev. William Williams* or the Rev. Mr. Giles held benefices in Bristol during the last century," it is so weak as to be hardly worth adverting to. It is true that the "Rev. Mr. Broughton was Vicar of St. Mary Redcliff from 1744 to 1772;" but can Mr. Ingram seriously believe that so busy a literary man could conduct the affairs of so large a church and district as those of Redcliff as well as perform the duties of the mother church of Bedminster, of which Redcliff was a chapelry, without the assistance of curates? Unfortunately, on my late visit to the church the books containing the names of the past curates were inaccessible; but I fearlessly challenge Mr. Ingram to prove that Williams and Giles are not among these names. A letter to the vicar (Rev. Archdeacon Norris) would enable him to ascertain the accuracy of my citations from the register, together with the names of the clergy who christened the three young Chattertons. Another letter to the Vicar of Sodbury would enable him also to find whether the maiden name of the poet's mother was Sarah Young, as given in my quotation of the MS. entry in the family Bible history. If your correspondent can yet

* Amongst the names of the subscribers prefixed to Thomas Richards's "*Antiquæ Linguae Britannicæ*," printed in Bristol, by Felix Farley, in 1753, is that of the clergyman who christened Mary Chatterton and her brother Giles Malpas. It is entered there as follows:—

"Rev. William Williams, Curate of St. Mary-Redcliff, Bristol."

This proves him to have been a curate of that church during the time the Rev. T. Broughton was the vicar.

W. G.

believe that the inscriptions I have supplied you with from that volume are a "fabrication," an "imposture," a "forgery," and a "hoax," I shall be glad to hear his further reasons in your columns. For my own part I still hold, both from internal and external evidence to the opinion, or rather assertion, that they are unquestionably genuine.

JOHN TAYLOR.

IV.

(From the *Athenæum*, January 7th, 1882.)

Bristol, January 2nd, 1882.

THREE out of the four MS. inscriptions in the Chatterton quarto Mr. John Taylor has verified by the Redcliff parish register. From an equally pure source I can prove the undoubted genuineness of the fourth, which records the marriage of the poet's father and mother "at Sodbury Church in Gloucestershire" (*"Athenæum,"* December 10th, 1881). The following extract from the marriage register of Chipping-Sodbury is certified by the vicar, the Rev. W. H. P. Harvey:—"Weddings, 1749.—April 25th, Thomas Chatterton of ye Parish of St. Mary Redcliff and Sarah Young of Stapleton." The accuracy of the information afforded by the fourth inscription is thus substantiated by the church register, and proves beyond cavil that the maiden name of the poet's mother was "Sarah Young"—a piece of information which Mr. John H. Ingram assures us is "certainly not" to be found in the biographies of the poet (*"Athenæum,"* December 17th, 1881).

"John Pipping" and "George Pew," Mary Chatterton's god-fathers, I have been able to trace. The former, in 1754, was a "haberdasher," the latter a "baker." Both voted for Beckford and Phillips, as did "Giles Malpas, Gent.," after whom the poet's elder brother was named (Bristol Poll Book, E. Farley [1754], pp. 17, 112, 119).

"Chatterton's mother," wrote Dean Milles in 1782, "informed a gentleman of credit" that on one of her son's visits to his home, happening to see Clarke's 'History of the Bible'—which was covered with one of the old parchments from Redcliff Church—"he swore a great oath, and, stripping the book, put the cover in his pocket, and carried it away." At the same time he stripped "a common little Bible, but, finding no writing on the cover, replaced it again very leisurely" (Rowley's 'Poems,' 4to., 1782, p. 7). Eleven years after the poet's death, Mrs. Chatterton, when showing Clarke's book to Jacob Bryant, mentioned its former parchment covering (Bryant's 'Observations on Rowley,' 1781, p. 521).

The Bible history from which Mr. Taylor copied the Chattertonian inscriptions printed in the "*Athenæum*" (December 10th, 1881) is now before me. Although very imperfect and without the title-page,

it can be identified, as the name of the author, "Laurence Clarke," is appended to all the dedicatory inscriptions on the engravings. According to Dr. Allibone, Laurence Clarke's 'History of the Bible' was published in 1737, in two volumes quarto. The present example, which is bound in one volume, appears to be the identical book that Chatterton so roughly despoiled of its covering as related by his mother. Notwithstanding Mr. Ingram's assertions that the MS. records in it are "palpable fabrications," &c., I have no more doubt of their genuineness than the "dealer in curiosities" had of the genuineness of the banknotes paid him (six days after Mr. Ingram's letter appeared) for the ragged quarto that contained them.

"No sooner is its true character displayed," writes Mr. Ingram, "than the quarto will doubtless disappear." This prophecy has yet to be fulfilled. Its true character makes it worthy of careful preservation as a very precious relic associated with Bristol's "marvellous boy." The book will now occupy a special glass case, which it is hoped may preserve it from being again exposed to the risk of destruction similar to that from which it has recently been rescued. I need hardly add that I shall always have pleasure in showing it to those interested in Chatterton.

WILLIAM GEORGE.

V.

(Extract from Mr. JOHN H. INGRAM's Letter in the *Athenæum*, January 7th, 1882.)

The few details Mr. Taylor proffers for use in my paper on Chatterton would be of no value even if they were not too late, as my paper concerns the poet and not his relatives. As regards the date of Mary Chatterton's birth, let me state that one of my authorities is the family tombstone in St. Mary Redcliff churchyard—a record which, strange to say, makes no allusion to "Giles Malpas," although it is so minute in its family history as to include two unnamed sons and a daughter of the aforesaid Mary. If this tombstone is to be relied on, and does refer to the same branches of the Chatterton family as the register referred to by Mr. Taylor, it proves that the poet's mother was only seventeen when this daughter Mary was born.

VI.

(Extract from Mr. JOHN TAYLOR's Letter in the *Athenæum*, January 14th, 1882.)

I am aware that the family tombstone in St. Mary Redcliff "makes no allusion to 'Giles Malpas,' and that the date of Mary Chatterton's birth there disagrees with my authority; but the

gravestone, like Mr. Ingram's own information, requires to be corrected by the parish register—the parish register being the Sacred Writ of the genealogist. As to Mr. Ingram's depreciation of these corrections, and of the fresh details supplied by the quarto, I am not concerned. He says that for the purpose of his article on Chatterton they "would be of no value even if they were not too late, as my paper concerns the poet and not his relatives." Chatterton's family ties, however, were of a very interesting kind, and, though I have no doubt of the ability of Mr. Ingram's paper, I hope he will have considered them more than he gives us to anticipate.

VII.

(From the *Bristol Times and Mirror*, February 20th, 1882.)

OUR readers have already been made acquainted with the newly-ascertained facts relative to the family of the poet Chatterton, which had been communicated to the "Athenæum" by Mr. John Taylor, and have been proved correct in spite of the animadversions of Mr. Ingram, of the London Post-office; or rather in consequence of the warm controversy between him and the librarian of our Museum and Library. Mr. Taylor, in his last letter to the "Athenæum" (Jan. 28) rather keenly tells his censor that he declined "any further correspondence on the subject of Chatterton until Mr. Ingram had referred to original as well as second-hand authorities." The following letter, which is the last on the point in dispute, appeared in last Saturday's "Athenæum." The writer, Mr. William George, is the present owner of the Chatterton quarto, which he bought *after* Mr. Ingram's condemnatory letter appeared, in which he calls the inscriptions it contains "palpable fabrications," &c. Indeed, as Mr. Taylor wrote in his reply, Mr. Ingram's fierce epistle "was the incentive to Mr. George becoming the purchaser." We would remind our married readers that at the date of the marriage referred to in the following letter, the ceremony of registering it was not the elaborate "sign, seal, and deliver" ordeal *they* so nervously passed through. In the old parish registers, under the heading of "Weddings," the names of the "happy couple" and the place they came from were entered—simple particulars that were frequently contained in a single line of the register. Even the name of the clergyman who officiated was not appended to the brief entry. Before 1753, births, marriages, and deaths were generally entered in the same register. This is the case in that of Sodbury. Mr. George says:—

Bristol, February 10th, 1882.

After Mr. Ingram wrote in the "Athenæum" (December 17th, 1881) that 'some more satisfactory evidence' should be produced as to the maiden name of the poet's mother being 'Sarah Young,' as recorded in the Chatterton quarto, I sent you an extract from the marriage register of Chipping Sodbury, which proved that was her name, and at the same time I supplied other information not to be found in the biographies of Chatterton.

In last week's 'Athenæum' (February 4th), Mr. Ingram, for the second time, animadvertes upon the variation of a year in the date of the marriage as given in the two records. The discrepancy did not escape my notice. That the truth might be ascertained, a copy of the marriage certificate was sent entire, leaving the point in question for further inquiry. As all the other dates in the inscriptions in the Chatterton quarto have now been proved to be accurate, I hope ultimately to show that this one is also, which dates the marriage as '*Monday*, the 25th day of April, in the year 1748.' The 25th of April, 1749—the year of the marriage as given in the Sodbury register—fell on a *Tuesday*. Mary Chatterton was born in Pile-street in the latter year, her father then being master of the free school in that street, and also sub-chantor of Bristol Cathedral (at the time when the distinguished author of the '*Analogy*' was bishop), which offices he held till his death. Can it be conceived that five weeks *after* her baptism in Redcliff Church her parents were married at Sodbury; and that this delayed wedding occurred in the very town in which fourteen years of her father's life had been passed!

The statement on the Chatterton tombstone, in St. Mary Redcliff churchyard, that Mary Newton (the abovenamed Mary Chatterton) was at the time of death 'aged fifty-three years,' is erroneous. As she was born '14th day of February, 1748-9' (i.e., 1749 present computation), and died '23rd February, 1804,' her true age—after deducting the eleven days dropped in Sept., 1752, through the alteration of the calendar—was fifty-four years and 363 days. When Jacob Bryant visited Mrs. Chatterton and her daughter in 1781, the latter told him that she was 'somewhat *more* than three years older than her brother' [the poet, born November 20th, 1752], (Bryant's '*Observations on Rowley*,' 1781, p. 521). This statement agrees with the above-cited record of her birth from the Chatterton quarto, and with the entry of her burial in the register of St. Mary Redcliff, a copy of which the vicar (Archdeacon Norris) has kindly sent me. It is as follows:—'Burials, 1804. Mary Newton, Feb. 27th, aged fifty-five.'

This proves beyond doubt that the age 'fifty-three' on the tombstone is an error for 'fifty-five.' As the inscription containing this blunder is one of the authorities quoted by Dr. Wilson, Mr. Ingram, and other writers on Chatterton, I assume it has escaped detection. I intend shortly to produce a facsimile of the inscriptions in the Chatterton quarto, accompanied by some new information on the subject.

WILLIAM GEORGE.

FROM the preceding correspondence (1) it will be seen that by Church Registers and the Inscriptions in the History of the Bible, the following *new facts* relating to the Chatterton family have been established beyond further dispute:

1.—That the poet's parents were married at Chipping Sodbury, Gloucestershire, and that the maiden name of the poet's mother was Sarah Young (2).

2.—That the poet had a brother who was christened “Giles Malpas,” in Redcliff church, on the day stated in the inscription in the Bible History (3).

3.—That Mary, the poet’s sister, was baptised in Redcliff Church on the day recorded in the Bible History (4), and that her age inscribed on the family tombstone, in Redcliff Churchyard, is an error (5).

These fresh details concerning the Chatterton family will have to be embodied by some future biographer of the poet, who, like Dr. Wilson, is in sympathy with his subject, and finds an interest in whatever may help to a more adequate understanding of the local family connections of one who has excited so much interest in the literary world.

(1). Other Letters on the subject appeared in the “Athenæum” of Jan. 21st, 28th; Feb. 4th and 25th, 1832. These are not reprinted, as nothing in them affects the three points mentioned in the text.

(2). See Letter IV. page 9. (3). See Letter III. page 8. (4). See Letter III. page 8. (5). See Certificate of her burial, page 12.

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